ASSOCIATED PRESS
27 November 1986   **FILE ONLY**

HOSTAGE WILLIAM BUCKLEY'S SISTER RETAINS HOPE HE IS ALIVE
PROVIDENCE, RI

The sister of William F. Buckley, who was kidnapped in Beirut in 1984 and presumed executed by Moslem extremists, said she retains hope that her brother is alive.

In what was apparently her first public comment on her brother, Maureen Maroney on Wednesday discounted as "absurd" reports that Buckley broke down under torture and confessed he was a CIA agent before being killed, The Providence Journal-Bulletin said in a story published Thursday.

"The truth is we don't know what happened. We may never know. And now all we can do is wait," Mrs. Maroney, 48, said in an interview at her Massachusetts home. The newspaper said she had asked that her exact residence not be specified.

Buckley was snatched from the streets of Beirut on March 16, 1984, appanently by members of the fundamentalist group Islamic Jihad. He became the first of a string of Americans taken hostage in the war-torn city.

Buckley's captors reported in October 1985 they had executed him after he confessed to working for the CIA, but his body was never found.

The Washington Post reported Tuesday that Buckley was the chief of the CIA station in Beirut and one of the agency's leading experts on terrorism. The story also said Buckley probably was killed months before his captors reported his death, and that he had disclosed information about CIA operations after breaking down under torture.

But Mrs. Maroney said she is not accepting such press reports, which have included stories that her brother was shuttled on private jets between Lebanon and Iran before his murder.

"There has never been any body," she said. "They talk of irrefutable evidence that he is dead. But where is it? I've gotten so I don't believe anybody."She said Buckley, who was born in 1928, grew up in Stoneham, Mass., in a Navy household. He was quiet and intelligent, excelling academically and in sports, she said. After high school he joined the Army, achieving the rank of captain.

"He always wanted to be in the Army, ever since he was a kid,"Mrs. Maroney said.

After graduating from Boston University with a degree in international relations in 1955, Buckley returned to the Army, serving in Vietnam in 1965, Mrs. Maroney said.

Buckley joined the State Department in 1983 and was sent to Beirut later that year as a political officer, according to the department.

"He knew it was dangerous there, but he went because he was ordered to," Mrs. Maroney said. "It was his job. That's the way he thought of it."